



CATAWBA COUNTY

3070 11th Ave. Dr. S.E. - Hickory, North Carolina 28602 - (828) 695-5800 - Fax (828) 695-4410

Public Health

Maria Reese, MS, Media Coordinator
Ph: 828-695-5818

NEW STATEWIDE FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT INSPECTION SCHEDULE TOOK EFFECT AUG. 1; CATAWBA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH IS ASSESSING ESTABLISHMENTS TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL RISK

Catawba County Public Health is focusing its restaurant and food service establishment inspections on those establishments with the highest potential risk, and those with violations more likely to contribute to food-borne illness, following a recent change in the State's rules governing the sanitation of food service establishments.

Local health departments began assessing facilities using the new process, which changes the frequency of inspections, on August 1, 2007.

"The State has changed the rules for the inspection of food service establishments to focus on those places that pose the greatest potential risk to public health," said Doug Urland, Health Director with Catawba County Public Health. "This means that those establishments with the greatest potential for food-borne illness risk factors will be inspected more frequently than, say, those that prepare ready-to-cook food. It is all based on the potential for food-borne illnesses."

Studies have shown that the types of food served, the food preparation processes used, the volume of food, and the population served all have a bearing on food-borne illness risk factors in retail and food service establishments.

"The fact is that the more food service staff handles, prepares, cooks, stores and reheats food, the more likely it is for food to become contaminated," Urland added.

Under the new inspection protocol, each food service establishment will be evaluated and assigned a risk category, developed by the North Carolina Division of Environmental Health's Food Protection Branch, and based on the type of food and amount of food preparation conducted in the facility. Risk categories are as follows:

Risk Category 1 - These facilities will be inspected a minimum of once a year, and include food service establishments that prepare only non-potentially hazardous foods. An example of a Category 1 facility includes some drink stands.

Risk Category 2 - These facilities will be inspected a minimum of two times a year and include food service establishments that cook and cool no more than two potentially hazardous foods (those foods that pose a greater risk to public health) received in a ready-to-cook form. Examples of Category 2 facilities include pushcarts, some grocery delis and pizza establishments.

Risk Category 3 - These facilities will be inspected a minimum of three times a year. The category applies to food service establishments that cook and cool no

"Keeping the Spirit Alive Since 1842!"



more than three potentially hazardous foods. Examples of Category 3 facilities include meat markets, school cafeterias, and some sub shops.

Risk Category 4 - These facilities will be inspected a minimum of four times a year and this category applies to food service establishments that cook and cool an unlimited number of potentially hazardous foods. Examples of Category 4 facilities include full service restaurants, nursing homes, school facilities serving preschool-aged children and caterers.

Previously, environmental health specialists were required to conduct a minimum of four inspections per year in each retail food service establishment. Points were deducted for violations and reflected in the final score and grade, but there was no requirement to correct items on-site.

"These new rules mean we can require a food service establishment to correct the problems on site, ensuring that the risk to the public is minimal," Terry Bolick, Environmental Health Program Manager, said. "Our focus will be on those places that pose the greatest potential risk, and our inspectors will be able to work with food service managers and staff to guarantee that the risk factors on which these rules are based are minimized."

The new inspection frequency is based on the risk factors identified by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for food-borne illness risk: inadequate cooking temperatures, poor personal hygiene, contaminated equipment, improper food cooling and holding temperatures, and unapproved sources of food.

For more information on the new risk-based inspection frequency, please contact Terry Bolick, Environmental Health Program Manager, Catawba County Public Health at 828-465-8270.

"Keeping the Spirit Alive Since 1842!"

